May 2008

DeafLife

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Deaf Life PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Stephen Sachs' play ***Sweet Nothing in My Ear*** premiered at Los Angeles' Fountain Theatre in 1997, and has since been performed around the nation. It tells the story of an intermodal couple—a Deaf woman and hearing man—whose son, born hearing, is now Deaf. The boy's father becomes intrigued, then obsessed, with the prospect of giving him a cochlear implant to restore his lost hearing. But the mother adamantly opposes it. Sachs wanted to avoid pat answers or preachiness, so he left the ending ambiguous, without resolution.

Even back then, there was talk of producing a movie version, possibly with Marlee Matlin—and I'm pleased to note that the plans have become a reality. ***Sweet Nothing in My Ear***, adapted from Sachs' script, premiered on the ***Hallmark Hall of Fame*** on April 20, starring Matlin, Jeff Daniels, Phyllis Frelich, and Ed Waterstreet, and introducing Noah Valencia. Although the ending of the movie softens the bleakness of the original script's ending, suggesting an impending reconciliation instead of permanent estrangement and divorce, it retains the complexity of themes—parental love, Deaf identity, culture, communication, acceptance, choices, normalcy, technology, different-ness, and belonging.

Lively debate continues over the characterizations, quality of signing, and authenticity of the movie's perceptions of the Deaf experience. Issues that are familiar to us—such as the argument in Family Court over whether being part of the ASL community limits a deaf child's options—may be intriguingly novel to many viewers.

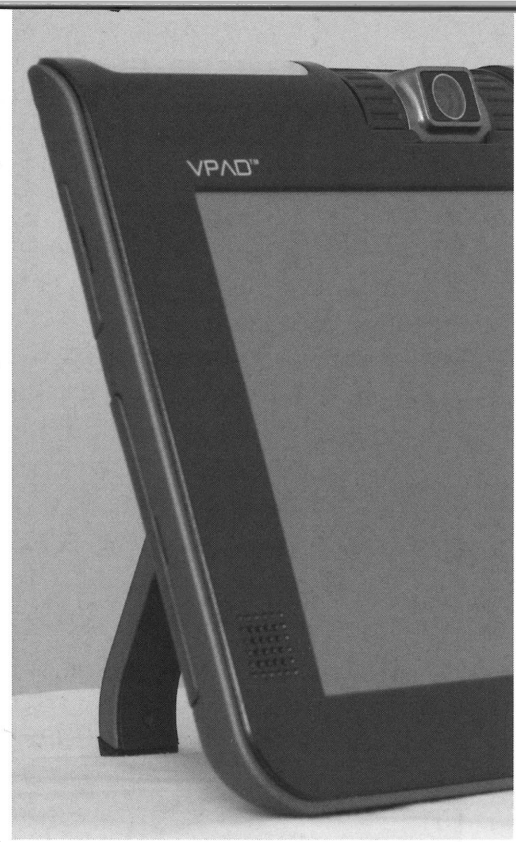
Viable's VPAD is a new portable videophone for VRS users. It makes it easier for deaf people (and hearing people, too) to have wireless video-communications. I handled a VPAD myself, and was impressed by its lightness. It's on the market now.

Matthew Moore

Deaf Life CHART

Our cover story

Viable's VPAD is not just an advance—it kicks off a new era in video-telephony. It's light, compact, and easy to use, with touchscreen controls and a clear 30-frames-per-second motion capture. Unlike conventional Webcams and Ethernet videophones that have to be connected to a power source, the VPAD is wireless. It's something to get excited about! **40**



VPAD photos courtesy of Viable

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IN OUR NEXT ISSUE...

The National Theatre of the Deaf recently marked its 40th anniversary. Founded in 1967 by a group of Deaf and hearing professionals, it's been a national treasure—one that faces an uncertain future.

ntd 40th

VOLUME XIII, NUMBER 5

Deaf Life

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Deaf Life MAIL

Georgia on our minds

I love the **DEAFLIFE**. It is important to let the world know about each person about their life, business, teaching school, jobs, Hollywood etc., T.V. show and need to show the Deaf and hearing Community and Deaf/Blind Community. What about in GA. Can we write story from GA who is famous. Can we write a book about the family abused and sexually abuse?? I was wondering if that would reach out deaf community because I never see that in the Deaf Life. I think it important to reach out young deaf people who have problem with abuse with the hearing parent or deaf parents. Would that make a difference in the world. We about to open a Deaf Comedy in GA. So, when the time is right. How can I write a book or how does this work?? Do we have to pay to print the book in **Deaf Life**?

Ellen Rice
Bethlehem, Georgia

The Editors reply: *We welcome news from Georgia. Contributors don't have to pay to have stories published here. We've published coverage about abuse, and will do more later.*

DEAFJOBS

Looking for a job? A job may be looking for you!

Jobseekers:
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Want to advertise job openings?
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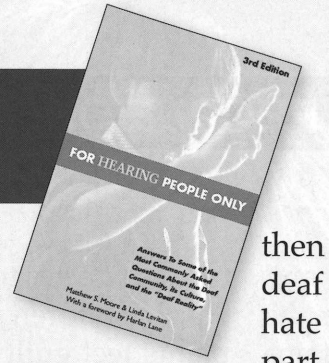
FOR HEARING PEOPLE ONLY

What do oral-deaf people think about members of the Deaf Community? And *vice versa*?

The feelings seem to run the gamut from the cordial to antagonistic, and small wonder.

As we've pointed out, there is no strict line of demarcation between "oralists" and "signers." Some culturally-Deaf persons, skilled and fluent ASL users, nonetheless have good speech skills that they use on occasion (and it's entirely a matter of comfort and choice to decide what the occasion should be). A fair number of deaf people who identify as "oralists" nonetheless have some signing skills—they have, at some point in their lives, learned to sign. That includes Mildred J. Oberkotter, whose parents established the Oberkotter Foundation in 1985. It promotes oral education, sponsors the Oral Deaf Education Website, and facilitates the placement of deaf children in oral programs. Even *she* learned to sign when she worked at Lexington School for the Deaf from 1990 to 1995.

The line of demarcation is more precisely ideological than practical. One can be an oralist but still respect ASL. Does a deaf person accept ASL (or any form of signing, for that matter) as a legitimate means of everyday communication for deaf people? Does s/he reject it personally? Does s/he enjoy watching signed performances? Does s/he believe that relying on sign language is constraining and restrictive? Does s/he believe that relying on speech gives her/him access to the entire world? Are there only hearing or other oral-deaf people in his/her support network, or does it also include ASL-Deaf friends?

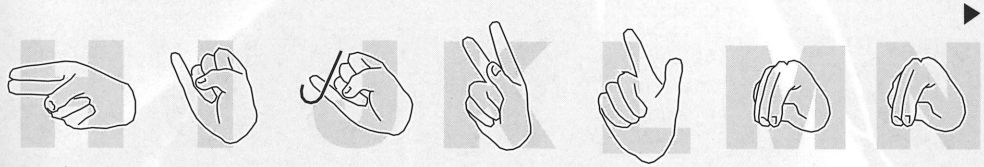


Each oral-deaf person is an individual, just as each signing-Deaf person is, with a variety of opinions and views shaped by their experiences. They may claim to adhere to a particular philosophy, or even a hard party line. Cochlear-implant advocacy attracts a number of hardcore oralists—many, perhaps most, of them supporting the implanting of deaf children. But not all oral-deaf people have implants, nor are implants limited to oralists. Some ASL-using deaf people have them too.

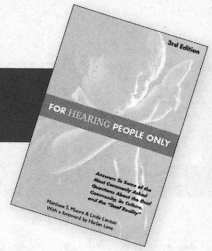
A few basic problems: One, that many oral-deaf people are raised to feel ashamed of their deafness. If the prevailing "medical-model" view is that deafness is a defect, a debility, a handicap, something to be overcome, made invisible, ignored, or eliminated, then it's not surprising that some deaf children absorb this attitude, hate being deaf, hate the deaf part of themselves, and see nothing to celebrate or be proud of except their success in the "hearing world." They often imbibe the prejudicial notions that sign language is pathological and signers are isolated from mainstream society. These attitudes are widespread among oralists, especially the hardliners.

Many oral-deaf people are raised to feel ashamed of their deafness.

While we don't deny that, medically speaking, deafness is a disability, and believe in making constructive alliances with other members of the disability community, since we have many shared concerns, we reject the strict medical model of deafness because it doesn't take into



FOR HEARING PEOPLE ONLY



account all that we can do and be. We prefer to emphasize the cultural model, which maintains that deaf people are whole, but different. We enjoy, even cherish, that difference.

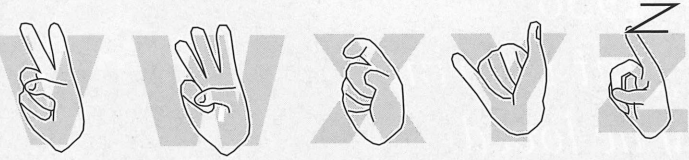
Another problem is the negativity encountered by oral-deaf people and their parents from certain Deaf Culture advocates. Some of this is an understandable reaction to the horrendous oppression that many of us and our Deaf ancestors have experienced under the oralist regime that ruled deaf education with iron-clad tenacity until fairly recently, but some of it is gratuitous bile-spewing. We've said it before and we'll say it again: it's counterproductive for Deaf Culture advocates to try to make parents of children with cochlear implants feel guilty, to accuse them of audism, cultural genocide, and child abuse. We prefer a more positive approach—reaching out and encouraging these families to become allies instead of adversaries. It's easy to post a blog fulminating against audism, oralism, oralists, oral-deaf spokespeople, and parents of kids with implants. It's more of a challenge to take a stand for Deaf rights and ASL *without* engaging in ranting, bashing, and sliming.

A favorite assertion of hardline oralists is that sign language isolates its users from mainstream society.

Bonnie Poitras Tucker and Lew Golan are two accomplished oral-deaf professionals with notably extreme views. Both have cochlear implants and have advocated for pediatric implants, the earlier the better, oral-auditory education, mainstreaming, and assimilation. Both have refused to learn sign language, and have made negative public comments about it. They argue that culturally-Deaf people constitute a tiny, over-publicized, over-loud, over-heeded minority, and that they don't speak for the vast oral-deaf majority. Both reject and stigmatize the Deaf community. Ironically, Tucker was appointed RIT's first deaf board member. In a recent **Washington Post** opinion piece, Golan put in his two-cents' worth on the "Unity for Gallaudet" protest. His comments were essentially a dusting-off of what he published in his memoir, **Reading Between the Lips** (1995), with echoes of his 1996 **Post** piece, "Dialogue of the Deaf: What Gallaudet Won't Teach," deriding the concepts of Deaf Culture and Gallaudet University as the center of Deaf America, and reiterating his favorite characterization of the protesters (and by extension, the Deaf community) as clannish, insular, and negligibly few—"a very small and self-marginalized segment of deaf people in America," as he put it.*

The boom in cochlear implants has sparked a boomlet in oral-auditory programs taking advantage of up-to-date technology, but oral education has remained consistent in one respect: it still insists on banning sign language, the current emphasis being on auditory learning, especially if the school follows the Auditory-Verbal or Jean Moog models. As the homepage of the Tucker-Maxon School in Portland, Oregon (founded in 1947; Moog model) puts it: "Our students who are deaf do not use sign language. Instead, with the help of digital hearing aids, cochlear implants, early diagnosis, and early intervention, our students who are deaf learn to speak and listen very well!" How very reassuring that must be. So what about literacy, creativity, academic skills, and the ability to communicate with other deaf people? Oh, well, maybe they're overrated. And we're willing to bet that there's a clandestine signing subculture in every new oral residential school, just as there was in every old one. ■ (To be continued)

*"Protest at Gallaudet: By, and for, the Few," **Washington Post**, October 26, 2006. See also **DEAF LIFE's** May 1996 cover story, which reprinted "Dialogue of the Deaf."



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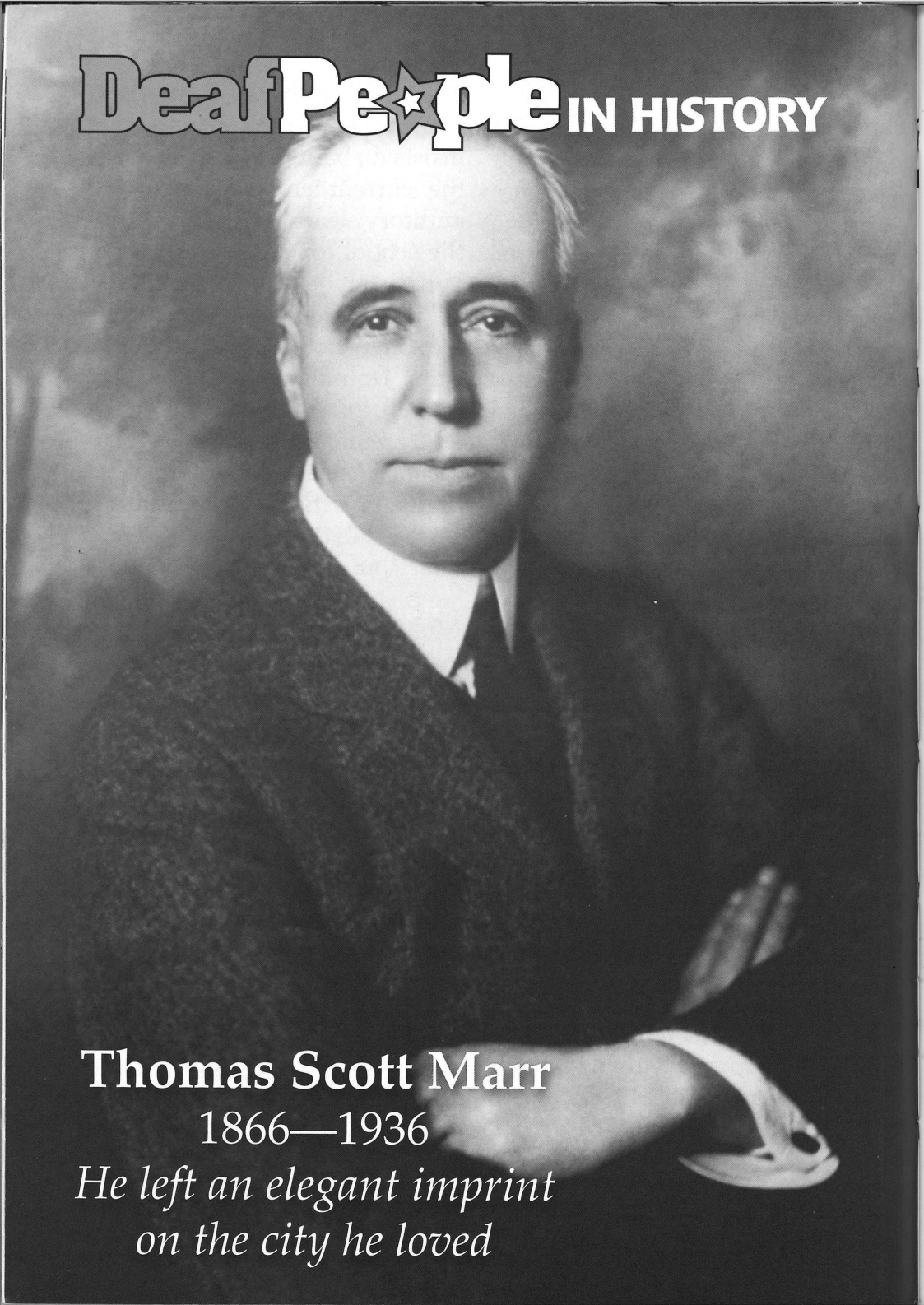


Thomas Scott Marr was born into an eminent Nashville family on October 20, 1866, and, shortly afterwards, severely deafened by scarlet fever. His father, Thomas senior, a native Virginian, was a banker. His mother, Delia (Tarbox), was from New York.

When he was 6, he watched, fascinated, as stonemasons constructed the Old Federal Building on Eighth Avenue, and decided that he, too, would become an architect.

Although he was obviously bright and already literate, he made no progress in public school, where he started as a second-grader. Held back for three years, he was given up as hopeless—a humiliating experience. His parents reluctantly enrolled him at Tennessee School for the Deaf in Knoxville when he was 11. With the encouragement of the principal, Thomas L. Moses, and a young teacher, Kate Ogden, he made rapid progress, mastered algebra and Latin, and became a top student.

In 1884, he entered Gallaudet College, and was given the first choice of rooms allotted to freshmen, an honor reserved for the highest scorers on the entrance exam. His roommate was a senior, Cadwallader Washburn, who later achieved fame as a drypoint etcher. He was also friendly with Olof Hanson, who was to become an eminent architect himself. The only architecture-related course was "Mechanical Drawing," and Marr's exceptional ability influenced his decision to become a draftsman. He graduated with honors in 1889.

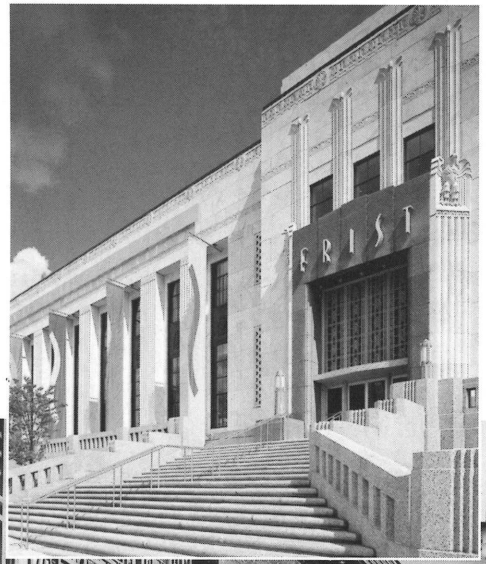
His first job was as an apprentice draftsman in the office of George W. Thompson, a well-known Nashville architect. Marr worked there for three years, then took special architectural-study courses at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston.

His stay at MIT was cut short after one year because of a sudden reversal in the family's fortunes—the financial panic of 1893. He was forced to return to work. He was welcomed back by his former employer, now the senior partner at the Thompson & Gibel firm. Marr worked there for several years, drawing a small salary because of the recession, then opened his own office.

He was said to be a fairly clear speaker and speechreader, but as he preferred not to speak, it was difficult to communicate with his clients. Most of his early commissions were thus for private residences. But his work became re-

spected for its high standards of quality and his integrity.

In 1904, Marr met an ambitious 13-year-old, Joseph W. Holman, who was selling the **Saturday Evening Post**. Marr hired him as office boy, and taught him architecture and business management. After several years of apprenticeship, Holman was put to work representing the firm and soliciting contracts. Marr established a partnership with Holman in 1910.



Holman handled the business transactions. Marr, as senior partner, focused on the actual architectural designs, drew the plans, wrote specifications, and supervised draftspeople. During their 26-year partnership, Marr and Holman were commissioned to design a huge number and remarkable variety of buildings, including hospitals, schools, a county jail, warehouses, courthouses, baseball parks, apartments, offices, theaters, and hotels. As the firm's reputation grew and the economy prospered, Marr became a "phenomenally successful" architect who designed many public buildings in Nashville and elsewhere in Tennessee, and even in other states.

Among these were a new campus for TSD (dedicated in November 1924), and four modern hotels for Nashville—the Noel, the James Robertson, the Sam Davis, and the Andrew Jackson. Styles ranged from the austere Colonial Revival (as in TSD's new campus—the work that Marr was proudest of) to Classic Revival (War Memorial Building) to a sleek, elegant Art Deco (Noel Hotel, Cotton States Building). Two Art Deco masterpieces were the Sudekum Building (1930-32), a strikingly beautiful 13-story office building with a cinema (demolished in 1992), and the magnificent white-marble-clad Post Office (1934), now the Frist Center for the Visual Arts. Its gleaming interior has been restored to its original beauty and sensitively adapted to its new use.

Marr's majestic Post Office is now Frist Center for the Visual Arts.

As the commissions kept coming in, Marr & Holman hired engineers to help handle the increasing workload. Several of these became well-known themselves, notably Richard S. Reynolds, who played an important role in Marr & Holman's success from 1923 on.

Early in 1936, Marr & Holman was chosen by Governor Hill McAlister to draft plans for the State Supreme Court Building—a handsome neoclassic edifice. It was Marr's last design. On March 2, 1936, he died suddenly of a stroke. He was 69.

Holman continued the firm, but its later designs lacked Marr's vigorous, distinctive touch. (By the early 1950s, Art Deco had gone out of fashion.) After Holman's death in 1952, his son Joseph Jr. and Reynolds kept the firm going until it folded in 1972.

A notable philanthropist in the Deaf community, Marr left a number of bequests, including a legacy to TSD to improve its library, which was named in his honor, and to Gallaudet College, which established the Marr Scholarship Fund. ■

Deaf Life Photos: p. 12, Tennessee School for the Deaf; p. 14, Frist Center. Thanks to all those who shared information and expertise.

John Yeh

Back in business with a new start-up, he's been expanding our communication options

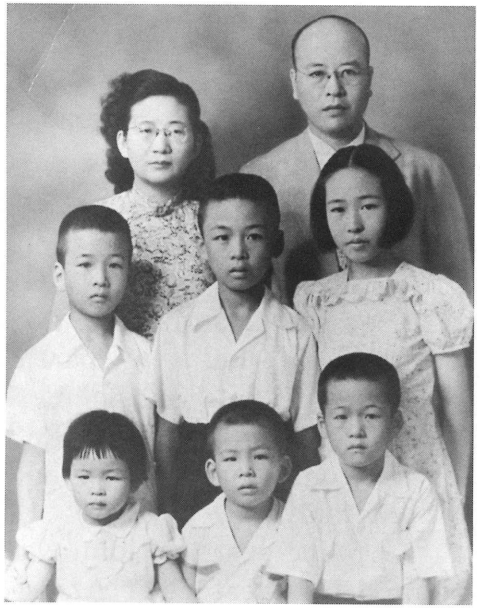
John Yeh's story is a remarkable, only-in-America one of persistence, dedication, and optimism. A native of Taiwan, he was born into a loving, supportive family—war refugees from Mainland China—who cherished high expectations for all their children. He and his sister, Fanny Yeh Corderoy du Tiers, were born deaf; they have three hearing brothers: James, Jeffrey, and Joseph. All have been involved with John's business ventures.

John and his wife, Mary Gibbs, a teacher, are alumni of Gallaudet College. They have two daughters, Mei Ling-Hui (deaf) and Ming Hui-Chung (who has Down's syndrome), and a son, Jason Tai-Wei (deaf). John received his Master's in Computer Science from University of Maryland in 1973, the first, and only, deaf student in the program.

In 1979, he founded Integrated Microcomputer Systems in Rockville, Maryland. Within a decade, IMS had become a multimillion-dollar enterprise specializing in software development, telecommunications, office automation, and systems engineering. In 1993, John became Chairman of IMS Technologies, the new parent company of three subsidiaries: IMS (governmental clients), IMS Service (commercial clients), and IMS International.

In 1996, the year that John was featured in **Great Deaf Americans: the Second Edition**, he sold IMS to CACI International, a large information-technology corporation based in Arlington, Virginia. Since then, he's been involved in various business ventures. He founded Viable Technologies, a remote real-time transcription service for deaf college students, in 2001. His new company, Viable Inc., founded in 2006, offers ViableVRS (remote video-relay interpreting service), Viable Vision (videophone service), and, this past January, unveiled its newest product, the VPAD. Notably, the majority of its employees are deaf and hard-of-hearing, including several Gallaudet University and NTID/RIT alumni.

His observations:



Above: Lin and Yu Yeh and their children, including John, his older brothers James, Jeffrey, and Joseph, and his younger sister Fanny. **Below and opposite:** John as a computer wizard and risk-taking businessman.

A lot happened in the 9 years between [my selling] IMS and [founding] Viable. I helped my wife raise our three kids. I co-founded the National Asian Deaf Congress in 1996 and the National Deaf Business Institute several years later. Between 1999 and 2001 I invested in several deaf-owned companies and explored dozens of other business opportunities before deciding to start Viable Technologies, which then led to Viable. I also served on the Board of Trustees at Gallaudet University during all this time.

I started Viable Technologies in 2001 from the ground up. There was nothing before Viable Technologies; it wasn't a business that I bought or took over. Our focus was the provision of real-time captioning services—also known as CART—and we wanted to improve on remote-captioning technology; instead of having the captioner come to where you are and bill you for travel time, the captioner would work from an office or from home and bill you only for service. This was our business focus for several years, then in 2005 we started a new company, Viable Inc, geared toward relay services. Viable Inc. has become bigger than Viable Technologies and in 2006 we moved into our current headquarters, which is a

former IMS office building and is the only visible remnant from my IMS days.

There has been progress in deaf Asian entrepreneurship, yes, but I think we have scratched only the surface of our potential.

All my kids are doing great. [Mei, who has a doctorate in Educational Technology, and Jason work for Viable; Ming works part-time at a hospital near Viable headquarters.] Joseph is vice president of Business Development at Viable and sister Fanny, my only deaf sibling, has been instrumental in securing a working relationship between Viable and the French Government. My other two brothers, James and Jeff, are pursuing their own goals; one is a consultant with the IRS while the other is a full-time grandparent. [Jason is a newlywed.]

We have appeared in the following: **Barron's Tech Trader Daily,** CBS, *CNET.co.uk, CNN, CNN Money* ("Best Tech for and by Small Businesses"), *FOX News,* **PC Mag, Popular Mechanics, SciFi's DVice**. *Telemundo*, the second largest Spanish-speaking network in the world, ran a video interview. Bloggers affiliated with *CES* and *Reuters.com* wrote about us, and user-generated videos of the VPAD are at *YouTube.com*.

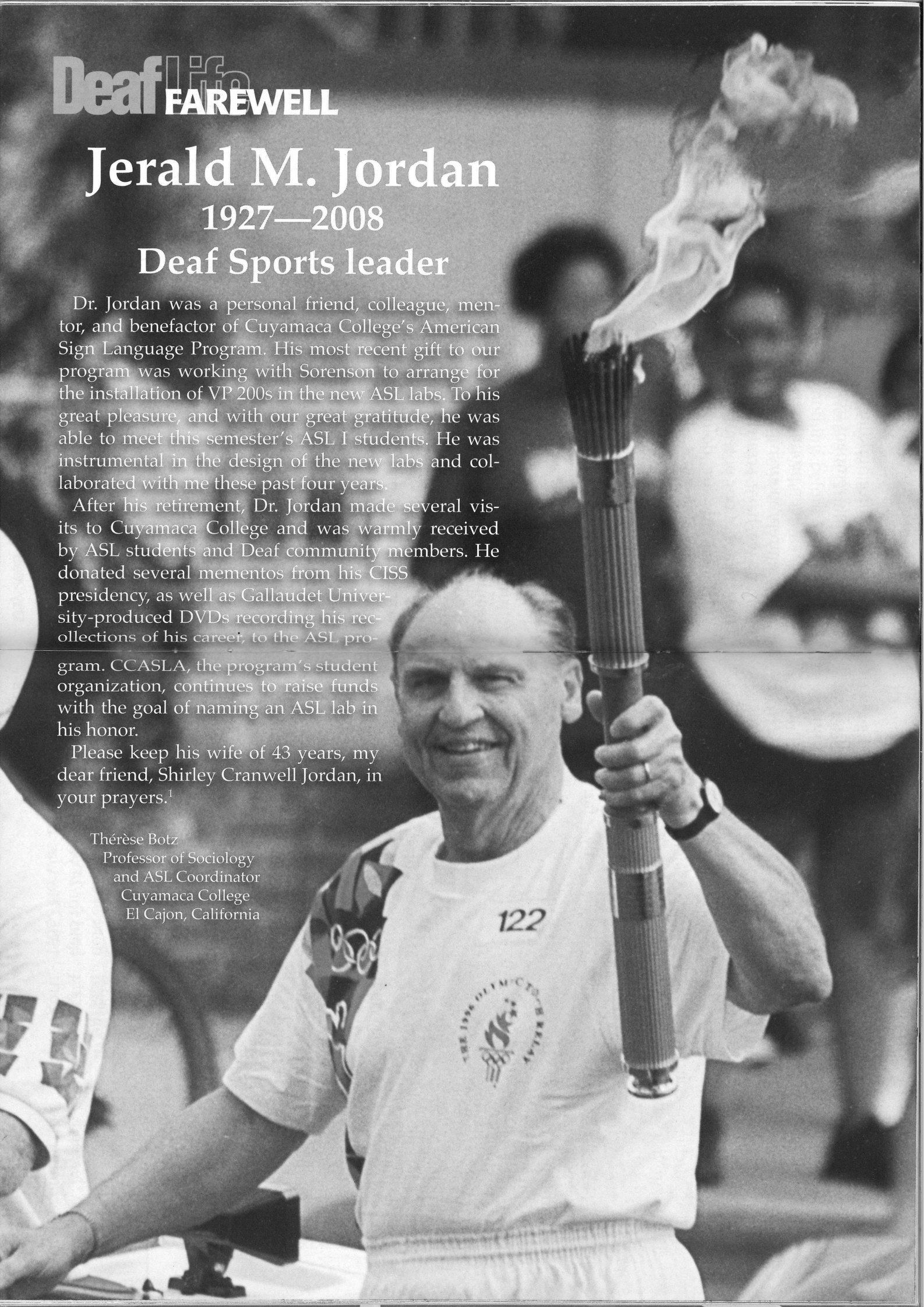
I went to Las Vegas frequently when I invested in one of my enterprises. I attended several trade shows, such as *Comdex* and *CES*. I remember attending *CES* in 1998 with two business partners, and we walked around the gigantic expo and saw gadgets that spun our heads around and inspired us to imagine a future of technological marvels. I said to them, "Wow, it sure would be great if someday a deaf company comes here with technology for the deaf." It wasn't until one of the old partners came to Viable's booth at *CES* that he reminded me of what I said a decade ago and that, remarkably and without planning to, I had come full circle. ■

Deaf Life Photos courtesy of Viable; particular thanks to Glenn Lockhart.

Jerald M. Jordan

1927—2008

Deaf Sports leader



Dr. Jordan was a personal friend, colleague, mentor, and benefactor of Cuyamaca College's American Sign Language Program. His most recent gift to our program was working with Sorenson to arrange for the installation of VP 200s in the new ASL labs. To his great pleasure, and with our great gratitude, he was able to meet this semester's ASL I students. He was instrumental in the design of the new labs and collaborated with me these past four years.

After his retirement, Dr. Jordan made several visits to Cuyamaca College and was warmly received by ASL students and Deaf community members. He donated several mementos from his CISS presidency, as well as Gallaudet University-produced DVDs recording his recollections of his career, to the ASL program. CCASLA, the program's student organization, continues to raise funds with the goal of naming an ASL lab in his honor.

Please keep his wife of 43 years, my dear friend, Shirley Cranwell Jordan, in your prayers.[1]

Thérèse Botz
Professor of Sociology
and ASL Coordinator
Cuyamaca College
El Cajon, California

Jerald M. Jordan, affectionately known as "JJ," died at his home in West River, Maryland, on March 26, following a year-long battle with lung cancer.

Born in Roseville, Michigan, on July 7, 1927, he was deafened at age 7 by spinal meningitis. He attended Michigan School for the Deaf, enrolling at Gallaudet College when he was 16. He participated in varsity sports, as scorekeeper, manager, and timer. He excelled in mathematics and science.

JJ's Olympic Order collar.

After graduating in 1948, he returned to Michigan and worked at his old school trade, printing. Seeking better opportunities, he returned to Washington, and worked on the now-defunct **Washington Star**, then **The Washington Post**.

Invited to return to Gallaudet, he taught physics, then algebra and geometry. He met Shirley Cranwell, a new member of the Communication Arts Department; they were married in 1964.

After Gallaudet installed its first computer in the early 1960s, Jordan learned how to operate it, becoming the "campus guru of computer programming."[2] He worked as founding director of the Computing Center until 1973, when he was appointed director of Project Talent Search. In 1976, he took a position in the Admissions Office; he became Director of Admissions and Records, and Special Assistant to the Provost. He retired in 1991, and received an honorary doctorate in 1994.

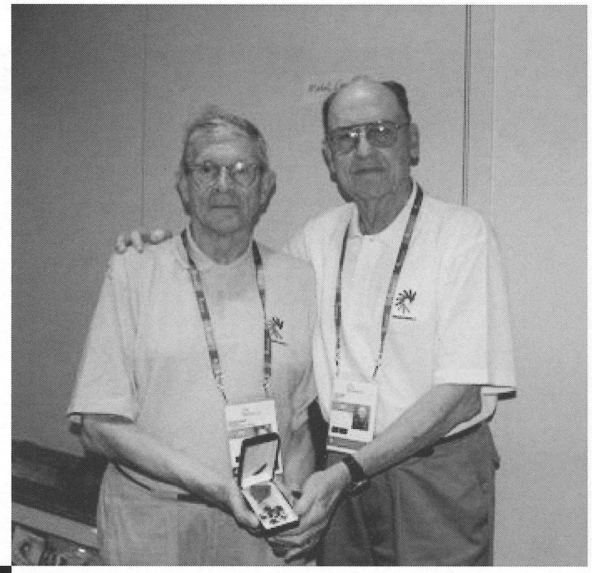
By far, he's best known for his long-time involvement with national and international Deaf sports. He served as Vice President of the AAAD (USA Deaf Sports Federation). In 1961, he began his involvement with the International Games for the Deaf (Deaflympics).

Jordan chaired the 1965 IGD in Washington, D.C.—the first Games held in the United States—and, in 1967, was invited to serve on the Executive Committee of the Comité International des Sports des Sourds (International Committee of Sports for the Deaf [CISS]). He became the fifth president of CISS in 1971, a position he held for 24 years before retiring in 1995. He was the first American to head the CISS. The work took virtually all of his free time—all on a volunteer basis.

He was inducted into the AAAD/USADSF Hall of Fame in 1970, chairing its Governance Committee from 1997 to 2005. In honor of his leadership, the USADSF established the Jerald M. Jordan Award, given to a deserving Deaflympic athlete or Deaf-sports leader.

In 1986, he received the CISS Gold Medal in recognition of his 28 years of service on the CISS Executive Committee.

In 1995, he received the Olympic Order from the International Olympic Committee, its highest honor—becoming one of only seven Americans to receive it and, so far, the only deaf person. In the same year, was given the title of Honorary Life Member of CISS/ICSD. He diligently served as Chair of the CISS Legal Commission until his death.


Left: Dr. and Mrs. Jordan, May 2007. **Above:** With the late Emmanuel Rossel of Belgium, Technical Director of CISS Football (1993-2005).

Another honor that Jordan cherished was when he became—unexpectedly—one of the twelve Deaf runners in the torch relay preceding the Centennial Summer Olympic Games (Atlanta), on June 20, 1996. He was chosen to carry the torch to Kendall Green, "where he was mobbed by a cheering crowd. 'That was a thrill,' he said."[3]

He is survived by Shirley, family, and friends. ■

1. Adapted from a letter sent by Dr. Botz to all Cuyamaca faculty and staff on March 27; used with permission.

2. "Class News & Notes: Jerald Jordan,

DeafLife Photos: pp. 20-21, Dr. Jordan; pp. 22-23, Dr. Botz. Particular thanks to Dr. Botz, and all those who responded and assisted us.

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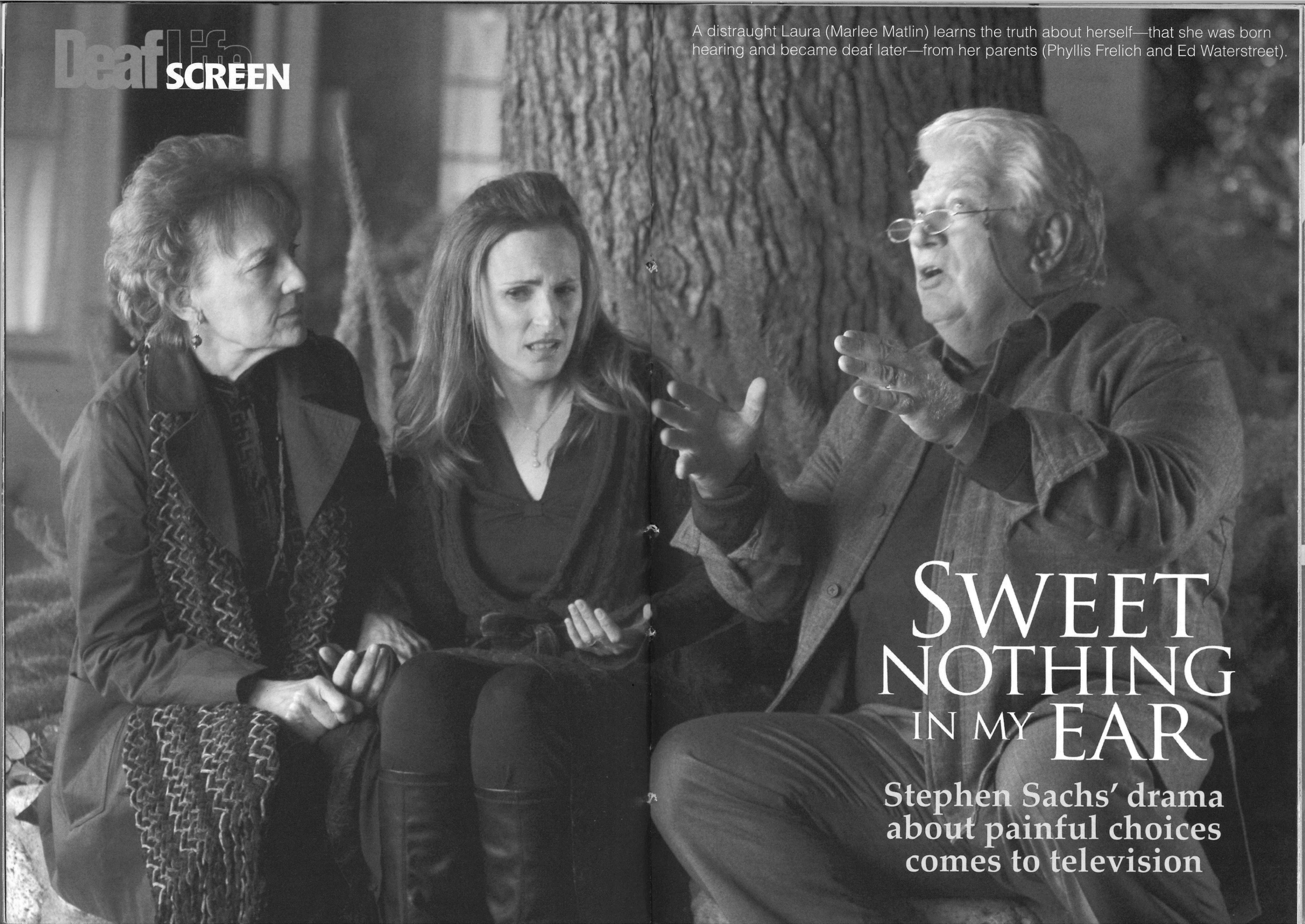


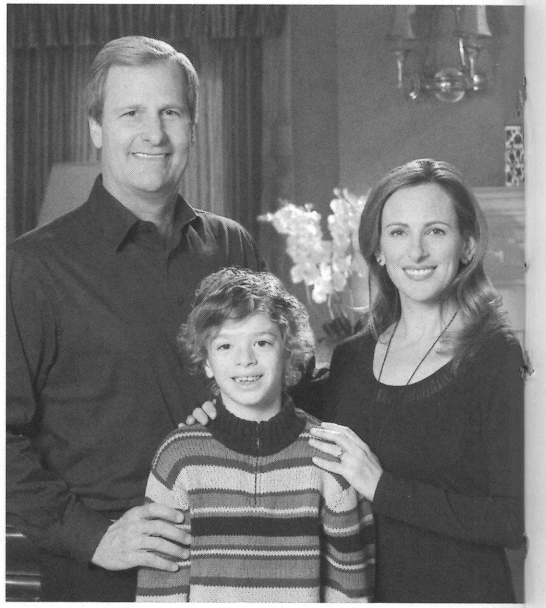
A distraught Laura (Marlee Matlin) learns the truth about herself—that she was born hearing and became deaf later—from her parents (Phyllis Frelich and Ed Waterstreet).

SWEET NOTHING IN MY EAR

Stephen Sachs' drama about painful choices comes to television

A breakthrough fictional drama about a Deaf-Hearing family torn apart over the issue of giving their deaf child a cochlear implant has come to television.

In 1997, Stephen Sachs' play ***Sweet Nothing in My Ear*** premiered at Los Angeles' Fountain Theatre.[1] After an extended run, ***Sweet Nothing*** was performed around the nation, and we're certain that wherever it played, after the curtain fell, members of the audience went home discussing, even passionately arguing about, the controversy it addresses.



Adapted from Sachs' script, ***Sweet Nothing*** premiered on CBS's ***Hallmark Hall of Fame*** on April 20, starring Marlee Matlin as Laura, Jeff Daniels as Dan, Phyllis Frelich as Sally, Ed Waterstreet as Max, and introducing Noah Valencia, a 9-year-old fourth-grader at California School for the Deaf, Riverside, as Adam. (Three other CSDR students were recruited for the ***Wizard of Oz*** scene.) Filming took place in Pasadena and Los Angeles last November.

Phyllis Frelich and Ed Waterstreet were brought back as a couple, and Frelich and Marlee Matlin appeared together for the second time in a TV-movie.

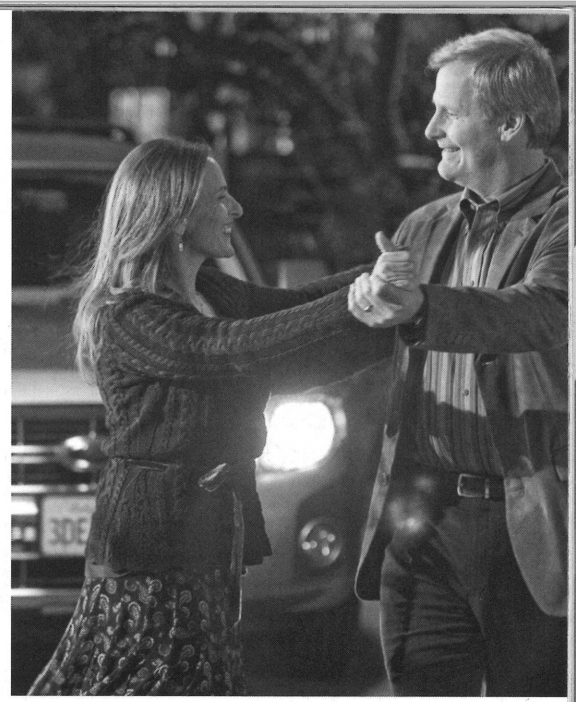
Sweet Nothing represents a homecoming of sorts, airing 23 years after the Emmy Award-winning ***Love is Never Silent***, which premiered on the ***Hallmark Hall of Fame*** in 1985 and also explored Deaf-Hearing issues.[2] ***Sweet Nothing*** Producer-Director Joseph Sargent received an Emmy for his directing work on ***Love***. Also returning for ***Sweet Nothing*** was ***Love's*** producing team: Executive Producer Marian Rees and Producer Anne Hopkins. Brent Shields, whose TV career began in 1993, is also Executive Producer.

The pairing of Frelich and Waterstreet was a treat—especially to those who recall their smashing performances as Janice and Abel Ryder in ***Love***. And ***Sweet Nothing*** brings Matlin and Frelich together for the second time since 1989.[3]

Other notable Deaf performers are in supporting roles: Shoshanna Stern as Valerie Parks, a successful implantee with a "CI daughter;" and Deanne Bray as Dr. Walters, a hard-of-hearing therapist. Linda Bove served as ASL/Deaf Culture consultant.

Opposite: "We were a family." **Below:** Dan rushes Adam, pretending to be an airplane, to school. **Right:** Matlin and Daniels (in a lighthearted moment) enjoyed working with each other.

John Rubinstein, who played James Leeds opposite Frelich in the original Los Angeles production of ***Children of a Lesser God***, plays Dr. Flynt, the veteran audiologist who counsels Laura and Dan about implants. Matlin's business partner, Jack Jason, was one of four ASL interpreters for the production.



This is a fast-paced, stylish, up-to-date production, with Ojo videophones, text pagers, cellphones, and laptops incorporated into the action. Laura enjoys a vintage movie in a cinema with a Rear Window Captioning reflector.

Although aimed at mainstream (hearing) audiences, strong efforts were made to do justice to the Deaf viewpoint. At times, there was an "audio dropout"

Even playing his guitar becomes part of Dan's campaign to pull Adam back into the "hearing world."

(silencing of the soundtrack), reflecting Laura's perceptions.

Pediatric cochlear implants have been a matter of bitter controversy since the first clinical trials were conducted in the U.S. in 1980, although the heat of argument has cooled somewhat over the past few years. Many of us recall the disturbing Grand Rapids, Michigan custody case (2002) involving a single mother, Lee Larsen, and her young deaf sons Kyron and Christian, who were removed from her custody on somewhat flimsy pretenses, placed with nonsigning foster parents, and enrolled in an oral-aural public-school program.[4] (The Larsens all used ASL.) The court-appointed guardian sought to have the boys undergo cochlear-implant surgery, despite their mother's opposition. Although Larsen's parental rights weren't terminated, the guardian sought to override her rights. During the trial, he made statements that infuriated Deaf people (and hearing people as well)—that implants would enable the boys "to live a healthy, happy, normal life," and without implants, the language-processing areas of their brains wouldn't reach full development. He presented several expert witnesses who likewise testified that implants are crucial° for a deaf child's language and cognitive° development.

Larsen and the Deaf community scored a victory—but an incomplete one. Although the court believed that it was in the best interests of the boys to have implants, it ruled that the state could not override Larsen's parental rights and require the boys to undergo surgery. But Larsen did not regain custody of her sons—which left open the possibility of their receiving implants if they remained in foster care.

Sweet Nothing's story is believable—it *could* happen. The plot is fairly straightforward; the issues

After seeing a vintage movie together, the Millers have dinner with their neighbors, Priscilla and Jerry Scott (Colleen Flynn and Steve Cell).

A family divided: Marlee Matlin, Jeff Daniels, Noah Valencia, Ed Waterstreet, and Phyllis Frelich.

it touches on are painfully complex.

Some ninety percent of all deaf children are born to hearing parents. By far, the majority of parents whose deaf children have received cochlear implants have been hearing. (A favorite argument of hearing parents opting for implants is "By doing this, I'm giving my child a choice.") As is noted in the movie, more Deaf parents have been choosing implants—the ever-popular "giving my child the best of both worlds" argument." For many parents, there is no cause for hesitation, and no conflict of values.

The movie doesn't go into depth on the pros and cons of implants, but shows the emotional toll the controversy takes on a family.

But Sachs made the Millers an intermodal° couple to give the conflict added depth and piquancy°—Laura is Deaf, has Deaf parents, and teaches at the Pinewood School for the Deaf, which Adam attends. She is proudly and passionately part of the Deaf community and culture, and teaches her students that being deaf isn't a handicap, that they should have high expectations for themselves. Adam, she insists, is normal, whole, and healthy as he is.

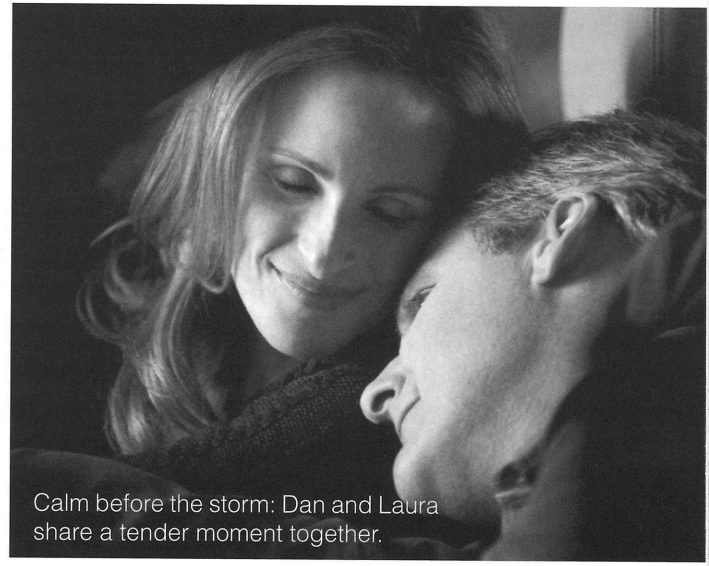
Dan, a successful PR executive, is a kindly, loving, dependable guy with a romantic streak. As a hearing man, he's understandably concerned about what Adam is missing, and about his future prospects. He wants Adam to hear and speak again like "normal" children. He wants to restore what Adam has lost—really, what *he's* lost.

Daniels movingly portrays the anguish of a man who loves his son, but cannot accept the permanence of his Deaf identity. Taking his signing as that of a man who has been married to a DODA for 9 years is a bit of a stretch. It isn't authentic, seasoned, smoothly flowing ASL, but he does try his durndest. (We liked him anyway.) Considering that he started from scratch when he took the role, he does a creditable° job.

Matlin, as always, is a joy to watch, with the expressive grace and precision of her signing. She has grown as an actress. She's absolutely convincing as Laura, a savvy° Deaf woman who loves her family, is honest enough to express doubts about her steadfast opposition to having Adam implanted, and is caught in the emotional crossfire.

Noah Valencia reminds us of the young Jeff Bravin, the auburn-haired show-stealer of ***And Your Name is Jonah***.[5] As Adam, the guileless° center around whom the storm rages, Valencia's signing was convincingly native, although slower and sparer than spontaneous signing would be—it was obviously learned from a script.

It was good to see representation of mature, educated, sophisticated, and successful Deaf people. Frelich, with her dazzling ASL, is a powerful presence—magnificent. We felt she was wasted, though—Sally only has a relatively few bits of dialogue.



Calm before the storm: Dan and Laura share a tender moment together.

Waterstreet nicely plays a jolly but gung-ho° Deaf Culturist. It was great to see the two clashing again—ASL pyrotechnics!° But we wish that they could have been given more representation,

"I miss my best friend": the hopeful final scene.

more interaction—that there had been time to have a fuller discussion of their Deaf insight.

It was also good to see hearing actors plausibly playing signing characters—Carlease Burke as Jennifer Kramer, the principal of Pinewood School, and those portraying the court interpreters. The caliber of acting, overall, was high, as was the ASL coaching.

The old arguments, all familiar to Deaf people, are expressed in the court scenes: Deaf and Hearing views of the value of speech and hearing, deaf literacy and employment, ASL as a language and basis of Deaf culture, deafness as disability. Again, the old troublesome questions are raised: are a deaf child's options restricted by belonging to the ASL-based community? Does an implant give access to a future without limitations? The debate gets heated, but the movie avoids preachiness. The focus isn't on whether or not deaf children thrive with implants, but the impact of irreconcilable° values on a family.

After the tears, fury, and ordeal in court, the movie ends quietly, on an optimistic note, softening the stark ambiguity° of the original play. Dan and Laura's final lines suggest that their love will prevail, that they will find a way to resolve this crisis together. But what decision they will make isn't stated or implied—whether Dan will give up his campaign to "restore" Adam, or whether Laura will agree to Adam's undergoing implant surgery, aural rehabilitation, and transferal to a mainstream school—and so the resolution is still left "up in the air." And will Adam be asked what *he* wants for himself?

All in all, ***Sweet Nothing in My Ear*** presents a balanced view of a controversy that still fuels explosive emotions. There are no "good guys" and "bad guys" here, just decent people trying to make the right decisions on issues that have no easy solutions. And viewers will likely be arguing about it long after the final credits scroll offscreen. ■

Noah Valencia gets to operate a camera, with Director Joe Sargent.

NOTES & WORDS

1. See **DEAF LIFE's** July 1997 cover story on the original play.

2. ***Love is Never Silent*** was based on Joanne Greenberg's novel **In This Sign**. This acclaimed TV-movie is slated to be released on DVD.

3. Matlin and Frelich starred in the 1989 TV-movie ***Bridge to Silence*** (directed by Karen Arthur). They played actresses in the fictional "Actors' Theatre of the Deaf," rehearsing an ASL production of Tennessee Williams' ***The Glass Menagerie***.

4. See "The Grand Rapids Case" in *Cochlear War* (http://www.cochlearwar.com/newsflash/003a.html).

crucial: extremely important; absolutely necessary to the resolution of a crisis.

cognitive: relating to mental skills and the ability to think.

intermodal: involving two different methods—used here to mean Deaf/Hearing.

piquancy: having a sharp taste; a stimulating or exciting quality.

creditable: worthy of praise.

savvy: smart, perceptive, shrewd.

guileless: honest, artless.

5. ***And Your Name is Jonah*** (1979; directed by Richard Michaels and written by Michael Bortman) was the first TV-movie to cast Deaf performers in Deaf roles. It was about a working-class couple whose son, deaf and bright, is misdiagnosed as mentally retarded and institutionalized.

gung-ho: extremely enthusiastic.

pyrotechnics: a fireworks display; a brilliant performance.

irreconcilable: conflicting beliefs or ideas that cannot be brought into harmony.

ambiguity: uncertainty of meaning.

Deaf Life Photos: Erik Heinila/Hallmark Hall of Fame; particular thanks to Ellen Nesselrode Jasa.

May

Dates to remember from our Deaf History

1 1860

The California School for the Deaf opened in San Francisco. In 1869, the school moved to a new campus in Berkeley. Steadily rising enrollments led to expansion, then, ultimately, the need for more space. Ground was broken for a new CSD-CSB campus in Fremont in 1977; it opened in Fall 1980. (CSD's other campus is in Riverside.) Noted for its rich history and innovative programs (e.g. Outreach), CSD-F is committed to the Bi-Bi philosophy. ASL and written-English skills are emphasized. Most of the faculty and staff are Deaf. Everybody signs.

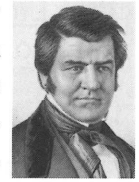
5 1868

Georgia Elliott Hasenstab (d. 7/26/1941), teacher and advocate, born in Illinois. Before graduating from the Illinois School for the Deaf in 1887, Elliott appealed to E. M. Gallaudet to lift the ban against female students at National Deaf-Mute College. She enrolled, but left after two years, taking a teaching position at Missouri School for the Deaf. She moved to Chicago to marry Rev. Philip Hasenstab (1861-1941), a noted Deaf leader. Active in the Methodist Church, she often preached at the Chicago Mission for the Deaf when Rev. Hasenstab was off traveling.

5 1942

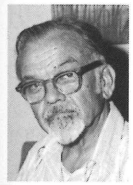
Gallaudet College's Dramatics Club staged a signed version of the hit comedy ***Arsenic and Old Lace*** at Broadway's Fulton Theatre. It was the first time a play was presented by Deaf performers in sign language in a major public theater. The overwhelmingly hearing audience, including members of the regular Broadway production cast and crew, and theater critics, gave the performance enthusiastic reviews. But the nation wasn't yet ready for a national sign-language theater. 25 years were to pass before the National Theatre of the Deaf was founded.

20 1809



Albert Newsam (d. 11/20/1864) was born deaf in Steubenville Ohio, early-orphaned, and had a dramatic, even Dickensian, childhood before he was finally enrolled in the Pennsylvania Institution for the Deaf and Dumb (Pennsylvania School for the Deaf) in 1820. A top student, he graduated in 1826 and started his apprenticeship as lithographer in 1827. One of the nation's eminent lithographers, he was a fine draftsman. His lithographs, including portraits of eminents, were noted for their clarity, detail, and the precision of his technique.

20 1905



One of the earliest ASL illustrators, Ralph R. Miller, Sr. (d. 6/9/1984) provided detailed line illustrations for several sign-language textbooks and children's books. He was likewise accomplished in calligraphy and screenprinting. Inspired by the work of his daughter, eminent DeVIA artist Betty G. Miller, he did paintings of Deaf Culture subjects—such as picnickers having simultaneous conversations in ASL—in bright colors, suffused with warmth and gentle humor. An annual award in his honor was established by the authors of books he had illustrated, given to an outstanding art student at Gallaudet University.

May

Dates to remember from our Deaf History

25 1951

Clayton L. Valli (d. 3/7/2003), ASL scholar and poet, born deaf in Newburyport, Massachusetts. His older brother and cousin were also deaf. Alumnus of Austine School (1971); A.A.S. in Photography, NTID; B.A., University of Nevada at Reno (1978); M.A. in Linguistics, Gallaudet College (1985); Ph.D. from Union Institute (1993). The first person to earn a doctorate in Linguistics and ASL Poetics, Valli was a renowned ASL scholar, professor, consultant, presenter, and trainer, traveling and lecturing extensively (e.g., conducting workshops in Canada). He did extensive research into the sociolinguistics of ASL, co-authored seven books, and published numerous articles. But he is best remembered for his influential work as an ASL poet and his contributions to ASL literature. Valli's death from complications of AIDS silenced an eminent ASL "voice." Two scholarship funds at Gallaudet University honor his memory.

29 1926

Mario D'Agata, the first, and so far the only, deaf world boxing champion, born in Arezzo, Tuscany, Italy. One of three deaf children (with four hearing siblings) in a hearing family, he was taunted at school, and became adept at street fighting, then attracted to boxing. He compiled a 90-20 record as an amateur, and, after turning professional, compiled a 19-3-2 record with 4 knockouts before challenging for the Italian Bantamweight title, which he won in 1953. After recovering from a near-fatal shooting by an associate, he won the European Bantamweight title in 1955. On June 29, 1956, he knocked out world champion Robert Cohen in Rome to win the World Bantamweight championship. Defending his title for the first time in 1957, D'Agata suffered burns to his neck and back when lightning struck the special lights set up for him in the open-air arena, although he insisted on continuing the fight, which he lost. He announced his retirement on August 26, 1962. He had a record of 54 wins, 10 losses, and 3 draws, with 22 wins by knockout. He is still regarded as a hero by some Italian boxing fans.

30 1766

John Brewster, Jr. (d. 8/13/1854), U.S. folk artist, born into a distinguished and wealthy family in Hampton, Connecticut. Now considered one of the finest post-Revolutionary limners (itinerant portraitists), he sold his work for modest sums, but evidently earned a more prosperous living than his physician brother. (There are no known portraits or self-portraits of Brewster; the detail at right is from his portrait of his physician brother Royal.) Between 1795 and 1834, he painted approximately 250 portraits, taking a 3-year sabbatical to attend the newly-opened Hartford Asylum—at age 51, by far the oldest in his class of seven. His striking, well-composed, austere, and hauntingly beautiful portraits of well-to-do New England relatives, patrons, spouses, and children, now command high prices in today's art market—when they can be found. Most are in prestigious museum collections.

Major sources: Jack R. Gannon, **Deaf Heritage: A Narrative History of Deaf America** (1980), Harry G. Lang, **Silence of the Spheres: the Deaf Experience in the History of Science** (1994); Harry G. Lang and Bonnie Meath-Lang, **Deaf Persons in the Arts and Sciences: a Biographical Dictionary** (1995); Matthew S. Moore and Robert F. Panara, **Great Deaf Americans: the Second Edition** (1996); Deborah Meranski Sonnenstrahl, **Deaf Artists in America: Colonial to Contemporary** (2002).

Photo credits: Detail of Douglas Tilden's "Bear Hunt"—CSD. Georgia Elliott Hasenstab, detail of Gallaudet College's Chapel Hall production of ***Arsenic and Old Lace***, Ralph Miller, and Clayton Valli—Gallaudet University Archives. Albert Newsam—Library Company of Philadelphia. Mario D'Agata—Boxrec.com. Royal Brewster—Massachusetts Historical Society.

VPAD: a leap into the future

Viable has unveiled the world's first wireless videophone, sleek and lightweight. It revolutionizes videocommunications.

During the last 15 or so years, there have been major advances in videocommunications technology—especially videophones. Here comes another leap.

Viable's new VPAD is the first *wireless* videophone. It features a 10.2-inch touchscreen and USB port, among other features. It's roughly the size of a tablet of notebook paper—thus the name. All in all, a welcome, and exciting, development in videocommunications designed specifically for deaf people.

Lightweight wireless videophones have transformed science fiction into reality.

And it's about time that we had a wireless videophone of our own. Even better, how about one designed by a Deaf-owned, Deaf-run company with Deaf executives and staffers, including those on the research-and-design team? We wanted it, we've got it.

The VPAD was demonstrated at *Consumer Electronics Show* (*CES Unveiled*) at Las Vegas Convention Center, the nation's largest consumer-technology trade show, where it caused a sensation. (There were some 72 exhibitors, with an estimated 250,000 attendees.) It made its media debut on January 5, 2008; the show was open to the public from January 7 to 10. The VPAD then went through its beta-testing stage.

It retails for $699—a hefty investment for many of us. (Discounts will likely be offered at upcoming expos.)

We interviewed some key people at Viable who were involved in the R&D phase; we had the opportunity to handle a VPAD in person before its official release in mid-April.

What does "VPAD" stand for? "Videophone"—and what else?

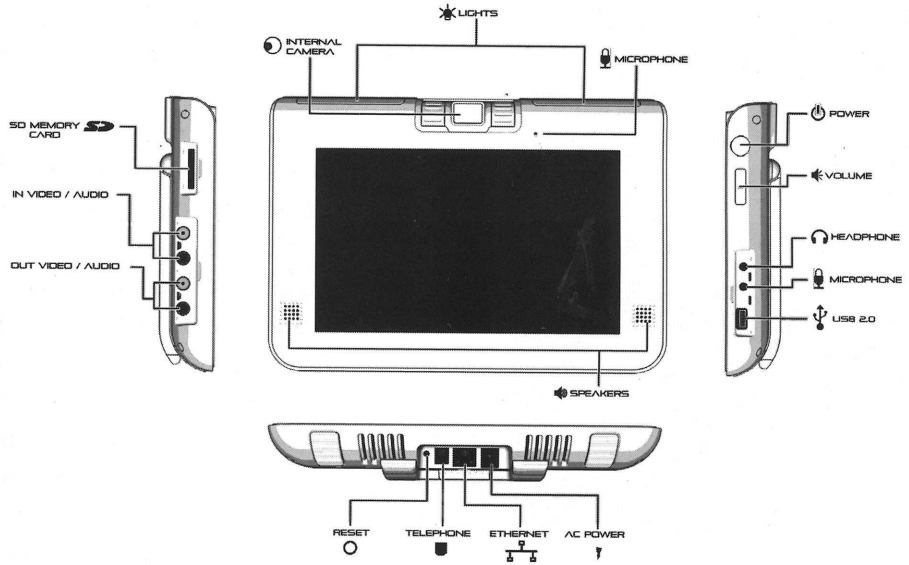
Anthony Mowl: We joined "VP" and "pad" together. We decided on this because the VPAD looks like a tablet and we liked that the name was short, self-explanatory, and easy to remember.

How does the VPAD differ from mobile phones that have video capacity?

Jason Yeh: The VPAD is an Internet-based device (Ethernet, Wi-Fi) and does not use cellular technology. As for the VRS experience, the VPAD has a 10.2-inch-wide screen and a kickstand, whereas mobile phones are small and must be held in the hand, making them an unattractive alternative for ASL users. We designed the VPAD primarily as a videoconferencing solution for deaf and hard-of-hearing people; it is a genuine advance over existing videophones available to the deaf and hard-of-hearing.

What are its advantages over text pagers?

Jason Yeh: The VPAD allows for effective ASL communication wherever you go, and that leads us to the advantage of ASL over text via pager. With ASL, there is superior communication flow—we all sign much faster than we



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Patents pending.

Snapshots from *CES*, January 5—the debut of the VPAD made a splash with the media. Jason Yeh is in the left foreground of the top photo, holding a VPAD.

type on our pagers, and with more confidence in our ability to express ourselves. The end result is communication that is truly satisfying.

Who is responsible for developing it?

Larwan Berke: A team of engineers at Viable and our manufacturer in South Korea collaborated on the VPAD. Our engineers are an interesting mix; we have about a dozen, of whom five are from Gallaudet University and RIT. Our engineers developed the user interface and the server architecture, implemented the server, and collaborated with our South Korean partners in designing the hardware. The actual factory production was done overseas.

Regarding the VPAD's debut at *CES Unveiled* earlier this month—what were the media people asking you and saying?

Glenn Lockhart: We were interviewed by many media outlets, some of them representing well-known establishments such as CNN and **PC Magazine**, some of them representing niche publications and are known mostly to technology aficionados. We also were interviewed by journalists and bloggers from Canada, Mexico, Brazil, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Norway, and throughout Asia.

John Yeh: They all asked questions such as why do the deaf need a videophone, why I founded the company, what technological alternatives there are for us. During or after interviews, some reporters congratulated us and said they were intrigued by deaf culture and wanted to do more stories like this. I remember this TV reporter who had to stop because the videocamera ran out of power and they had to change batteries, so we talked about which buffet in Las Vegas was the best.

How is the VPAD being marketed?

Anthony Mowl: We are beta-testing the VPAD not only to find and fix bugs but also to add functionality and value to the device. We intend for the VPAD to forever redefine consumer expectations for videophones as we work to make the VPAD available to every deaf person, regardless of their VRS-provider loyalties.

Text pagers normally have restricted areas of usability. For example, I can't take mine abroad, as it won't work there. Does the VPAD work anywhere in the world?

Larwan Berke: It might help to think of the VPAD as a laptop rather than a cell phone. We have tested the VPAD in the U.S., Europe and Asia, and the VPAD will work worldwide wherever you have AC power and a wired or Wi-Fi Internet connection.

What are your future plans? Where do you see yourselves a year from now? Five years?

Jason Yeh: I envision Viable in 2009 continuing as an end-to-end provider of top-notch relay services and developing video communication technologies of greater sophistication, most visibly by adding functionalities and enhancements to the VPAD and to Viable Vision, our videophone software for the PC. Five years from now, I would love for Viable to enable a university research lab where deaf engineers and inventors can develop prototypes to our technologies. I hope for Viable to be positioned to help our community actualize its dreams of self-empowerment. ■

Deaf Life Photos courtesy of Viable; particular thanks to Glenn Lockhart.

DeafView

READERS' VIEWPOINT

READERS' RESPONSES

Do hearing sportswriters ignore or downplay the achievements of deaf athletes?

54% Yes 18% No 28% Not sure

YES (Hearing)—I think that they are overlooked. How often do you look in the paper and read about a Deaf athlete? I can't ever say that I have read about one. A Deaf athlete SHOULD be in the papers if they are good enough to be there.

NO (Hearing)—I think they actually elevate them and point them out even more.

YES (Deaf)—Austin Newspaper locates only three blocks from Texas School for the Deaf. They never write an article about deaf athletes. It seems they think deaf athletes are second class athlete. Same thing happened to black people in 50 years ago.

NO (Deaf)—The sportswriters did excellent job on Brandon Reese, former Texas School for the Deaf football player. They even published his large picture on the front page of sports section, not only that, it is in color!

YES (Deaf)—Because they are afraid to come up to us and ask questions. I am an all-conference and an all-state athlete and I have yet to be approached by a reporter.

NO (Deaf)—I was an active varsity softball player back in high school. I was the starting pitcher all three years from soph to senior year, and I was always interviewed and been mentioned in many sport articles in the newspapers. Sportswriters do not degrade us but rather, they are amazed at the ability we [show] to succeed in sports, especially with a hearing loss.

Total number of "DeafView" responses: **109**

DeafView

READERS' VIEWPOINT

DEAF LIFE would like to know what you think about major issues affecting the Deaf community. Fax your response to (585) 442-6371, E-mail us at deafview.com or send it to us at Box 23380, Rochester, NY 14692-3380

Is it ethical for hearing-run VRS providers to make profits from providing technology to deaf customers?

❑Yes ❑No ❑Not sure

Most telecommunications corporations and video-relay-service providers are run by hearing people. With a few exceptions, most of the staff and chief executives at these companies are also hearing. Only a few VRS providers are Deaf-owned and Deaf-staffed. Some hearing-run telecommunications corporations don't give money back to the Deaf community (in the form of sponsorships and other initiatives). There have been rumors about the possibility of a Deaf Community protest or boycott against such corporations. They exist to serve the needs of deaf customers, but some Deaf people complain that it's exploitation—that Deaf money should be used to benefit the Deaf community.

Deadline: August 1, 2008

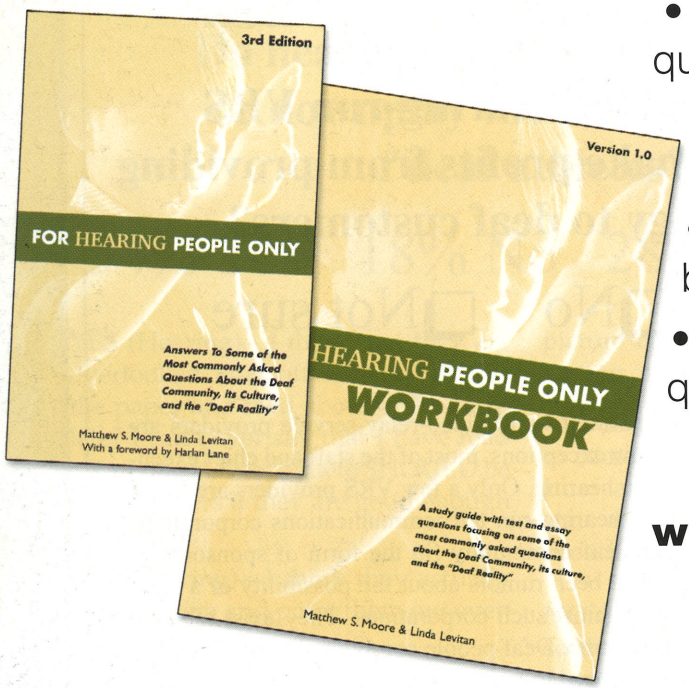
Visit the
DeafView homepage at

www.deafview.com

to respond to this and the other upcoming questions.
(24 questions are currently posted.)

FOR HEARING PEOPLE ONLY

Our best-selling book, **For Hearing People Only: Third Edition**, now has a companion—the **Student's Workbook**. It can be used for either self-guided instruction or in conjunction with a formal high-school or college course. Each workbook chapter, keyed to a book chapter, contains: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Matthew S. Moore & Linda Levitan
With a foreword by Harlan Lane
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